



# DPKO and DFS Standard Operating Procedure

January 2006

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## Access and Declassification of Archives and Non-Current Records

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Approved by: J.M. Guéhenno, USG/DPKO  
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Date amended: 31 March 2008  
Amendments approved by: C. Pollard, Chief of Staff, DPKO  
Approval date: 4 April 2008

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Pollard'.

Contact: Peacekeeping Information Management Unit, OUSG/DPKO  
Review date: 30 April 2010

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## PROCEDURE FOR ACCESS AND DECLASSIFICATION OF ARCHIVES AND NON-CURRENT RECORDS

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### **A. PURPOSE**

1. The purpose of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to establish DPKO and DFS access and declassification procedure for archives and non-current records further to ST/SGB/2007/5 *Record-keeping and the Management of United Nations Archives* and ST/SGB/2007/6 *Information Sensitivity, Classification and Handling*. The procedure adheres to accountability and transparency standards of the United Nations Secretariat.
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### **B. SCOPE**

2. This SOP applies to DPKO and DFS Headquarters. Compliance is mandatory as provided in Section G on Monitoring and Compliance.
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### **C. RATIONALE**

3. According to ST/SGB/2007/5 *Record-keeping and the Management of United Nations Archives*, Section 7.1:

Staff members shall have access to archives and non-current records necessary to conduct their official business, subject to the terms and conditions established by the Secretary-General.

According to ST/SGB/2007/6 *Information Sensitivity, Classification and Handling*, Section 4.3:

Records that are classified as “strictly confidential” shall be reviewed on an item-by-item basis by the Secretary-General, or by such officials as the Secretary-General so authorizes, for possible declassification when 20 years old. Those not declassified at that time shall be further reviewed, every 5

years thereafter, by the Secretary-General or by such officials as the Secretary-General so authorizes, for possible declassification.

Records that are classified as "confidential" shall be declassified automatically by the Archives and Records Management Section when 20 years old.

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## D. PROCEDURES

### 4. General

4.1 This SOP must be used in conjunction with ST/SGB/2007/5, ST/SGB/2007/6, and the DPKO and DFS Policy Directive on Records Management (Amended 31 December 2007).

4.2 Each DPKO and DFS office or division must provide the Peacekeeping Information Management Unit (IMU), OUSG/DPKO, with the name of a records focal point who will be responsible for:

- processing, at the division or office level, the review of requests for access and declassification of archives and non-current records;
- ensuring that sensitive information is protected;
- conveying to the IMU recommendations to grant or not to grant access or declassification

### 5. Processing Requests for Access and Declassification of Archives and Non-Current Records

5.1 ARMS coordinates Secretariat access and declassification requests for archives and non-current records.

5.2 ARMS initiates the access or declassification process by determining which departments/offices need to be involved in a request. For DPKO and DFS-related requests, ARMS sends the requests to, inter alia, the IMU, which forwards them to the relevant DPKO or DFS records focal point.

5.3 The records focal point must assess requests on a case by case basis by examining copies of records or information about the records (supplied by ARMS) and decide whether to recommend access or declassification based on the current level of sensitivity of the information in the records, and by consulting the substantive people involved.

5.4 Prior to recommending access or declassification, careful consideration must be given to the categories of sensitive information listed in ST/SGB/2007/6, Section 1.2:

- (a) [Records] created by the United Nations, received from or sent to third parties, under an expectation of confidentiality;
- (b) [Records] whose disclosure is likely to endanger the safety or security of any individual, violate his or her rights or invade his or her privacy;
- (c) [Records] whose disclosure is likely to endanger the security of Member States or prejudice the security or proper conduct of any operation or activity of the United Nations, including any of its peacekeeping operations;

- (d) [Records] covered by legal privilege or related to internal investigations;
- (e) Internal inter-office or intra-office documents, including draft documents, if disclosure would undermine the Organization's free and independent decision-making process;
- (f) [Records] containing commercial information, if disclosure would harm either the financial interests of the United Nations or those of other parties involved;
- (g) Other kinds of information, which because of their content or the circumstances of their creation or communication must be deemed confidential.

- 5.5 A records focal point should process records access and declassification requests where records are clearly identified and the request for access or declassification involves fewer than 20 records.
- 5.6 Where records access and declassification requests are not clearly defined, or involve more than 20 records, the requestor should be asked for greater specificity about the records requested, and/or should be directed to online resources such as the Official Document System (ODS), as a logical starting place for research on UN public documents.
- 5.7 When a records focal point has made a recommendation, the IMU will forward this decision to ARMS, which will then consult other relevant departments and offices as required.
- 5.8 If the Secretariat departments and offices involved (the "Offices of Interest") cannot reach a consensus to grant access to or declassify the records, the request is denied. ARMS retains the current security classification(s) and access to the records remains restricted.
- 5.9 If Secretariat Offices of Interest reach a consensus to grant access to the records, the requestor alone may consult the records. ARMS retains the current security classification(s), and access to the records remains restricted.
- 5.10 If Secretariat Offices of Interest reach a consensus to declassify the records, ARMS changes the security classification to "Declassified" and access to the records is granted to the current and all future requestors.
- 5.11 ARMS notifies records requestors of the results of records access and declassification requests and maintains a database of access and declassification decisions.

## **6. Responsibilities**

- 6.1 The Under-Secretaries-General of DPKO and DFS, in collaboration with the Assistant Secretaries-General and Division heads in both departments have the responsibility to ensure that DPKO and DFS comply with these information security procedures.
- 6.2 DPKO and DFS records focal points are responsible for reviewing records and making records access and declassification recommendations, and liaising with the IMU during the processing of requests for access and declassification.

- 6.3 ARMS is responsible for records access and declassification policy development, implementation and compliance throughout the Secretariat.
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## E. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

7. The following definitions apply to this directive and subsidiary SOPs and guidelines:

**Access** – The right, opportunity, or means of finding, using or retrieving information. The granting of permission, usually on a case-by-case basis, to examine and study individual archives and records; to extract information from archives and records for general consultation.

**Archives** – Those records that are appraised as having historical value and are no longer required for current use.

**Declassification** – The process of making previously restricted materials available for general consultation.

**Office of Interest** – Any United Nations department or office that, according to ARMS, should be involved in the assessment of records access and declassification determination requests. For requests concerning DPKO and DFS records, other offices usually include the Department of Political Affairs, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Office of Legal Affairs, and the Office of Human Resources Management.

**Private or Privileged Information** – Information intended for or restricted to the use of a particular person or group or class of persons, not available to the public or broader audience because disclosure of such information would constitute a breach of good faith or an invasion of privacy. Examples include personnel records, medical records, etc.

**Records** – Information created, received and maintained by an organization or person and maintained as evidence in the transaction of operations or business.

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## F. REFERENCES

### I. Normative or superior references

- ST/SGB/2007/5 *Record-keeping and the Management of United Nations Archives*  
<http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/4686867.html>
- ST/SGB/2007/6 *Information Sensitivity, Classification and Handling*  
<http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/254118.7.html>

### II. Related policies, SOPs or Guidelines

- DPKO and DFS Policy Directive on Records Management (Amended 31 December 2007)  
<http://intranet.dpkointranet.org/dpkointranet/pages/DocumentDetails.aspx?DocId=2748>
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## G. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

8. The IMU will monitor implementation of this SOP.
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**H. DATES**

9. This SOP became effective on 1 July 2006.
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**I. CONTACT**

10. The IMU should be contacted for information about this SOP.
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**J. HISTORY**

11. Amended 31 January 2008. See attached schedule of amendments.
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**SIGNED:**

**DATE:**

**Schedule of Amendments**

<b>Date of Amendment</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Signature</b>
31 January 2008	Global change: "DPKO" to "DPKO and DFS"	Catherine Pollard, Chief of Staff, DPKO
31 January 2008	Title: Changed from "Records Access and Declassification" to "Access and Declassification of Archives and Non-Current Records"	Ibid.
31 January 2008	Section A: Purpose clarified to Access and Declassification of <i>Archives and Non-Current Records</i> .	Ibid.
31 January 2008	Current Section 3: Text from superseded ST/AI/326 replaced with text from ST/SGB/2007/5 and ST/SGB/2007/6.	Ibid.
31 January 2008	Section 4.1: Reference to ST/SGB/2007/5 and ST/SGB/2007/6 added.	Ibid.
31 January 2008	Section 4.2: Responsibility changed from USG/DPKO to Peacekeeping Information Management Unit.	Ibid.
31 January 2008	Current Section 5.1: Requests no longer may be submitted directly to OUSG/DPKO.	Ibid.
31 January 2008	Current Section 5.2: Previously Section 6.2.	Ibid.
31 January 2008	Current Section 5.3: Previously Section 6.6.	Ibid.
31 January 2008	Current Section 5.4: Guidance added, based on ST/SGB/2007/6.	Ibid.
31 January 2008	Current Section 5.5: Previously Section 5.2.	Ibid.
31 January 2008	Current Section 5.6: Previously Section 5.3.	Ibid.

<b>31 January 2008</b>	<b>Current Section 5.7: Previously Section 6.7.</b>	<b>Ibid.</b>
<b>31 January 2008</b>	<b>Current Sections 5.8 through 5.11: Clarification and expansion of previous Sections 6.8 and 6.9.</b>	<b>Ibid.</b>
<b>31 January 2008</b>	<b>Previous Section 6, “Rights of Access”, deleted, except for sections noted above.</b>	<b>Ibid.</b>
<b>31 January 2008</b>	<b>Section F: Hyperlinks added.</b>	<b>Ibid.</b>
<b>31 January 2008</b>	<b>Section G: OUSG/DPKO changed to Peacekeeping Information Management Unit.</b>	<b>Ibid.</b>
<b>31 January 2008</b>	<b>Section I: Peacekeeping Best Practices Section changed to Peacekeeping Information Management Unit.</b>	<b>Ibid.</b>